President:
Tom Titmus
299-2030

Lafayette Historical Society
POST OFFICE BOX 133, LAFAYETTE, CA 94549

NEWS

Lafayette, California | October 2000 | Vol. 27, No. 3

President's Message

The last quarter of the first year of the millennium is upon us. Or, are we actually approaching the first day (January 1, 2001) of the new millennium? The argument is made that December 31, 2000 is the end of our 2000 calendar years. That's another piece of history we can discuss at another time. But we can still prepare for another great New Year's Eve.

What has the Lafayette Historical Society been discussing as 2001 rambles in? In no particular order, please check on the following:

1. The LHS Board has approved a $7,500.00 donation to the Lafayette Community Foundation. That donation is to be designated for a history room in the expected new City of Lafayette Library.

2. Will we ever find a permanent protected parking place for "Old Betsy", our favorite Model T Ford fire engine? We are still looking and let us know if you can help. You can never tell when the Consolidated Fire District may need some backup.

3. The LHS Board is also searching for a location to store various items that have been accumulated over the years. The kindly benefactor who has provided pro bono space now needs that space for business purposes.

4. The Lafayette Improvement Association (LIA) and LHS Boards have discussed the future of the Town Hall Theater property currently owned by LIA and basically occupied by the Town Hall Theater Group, a separate entity. The LIA has been kind enough to allow LHS the use of a meeting room for our board meetings.

5. A substantial number of LHS members have not responded to our annual dues request. $10.00 per year should not be a major burden. Youngsters probably have a weekly allowance along those lines. Maybe our members have too many children. That can't be, we are perceived as being a super senior group. Shall we encourage a junior membership? You will note that our mission statement declares that we strive to link Lafayette's history to the lives of people. This is a good time to encourage the expansion of our membership and to particularly aim for participation by the younger families in our city.

All persons are invited to respond to any of the above questions and direct constructive recommendations to the Lafayette Historical Society at P.O. Box 133, Lafayette, CA 94549.

—by Tom Titmus

A New Piece of Lafayette's History

This summer, when men were breaking up the concrete for the new right turn lane on Mt. Diablo Blvd. by the World Savings building, Sue Kibby at Mail Boxes, Etc., became our unofficial watchdog to be sure the Pony Express monument was not damaged. For several days, she checked periodically, as the backhoe came nearer and nearer, expressing her concern to the men on the construction crew. One

"We believe in the power of history to ignite the imagination, stimulate thought and provide enjoyment. Through our collections and programs we strive to link Lafayette's history to the lives of people."

day when I went into Mail Boxes, Etc., Sue spoke to me and suggested I speak to the men.

As soon as I went out to check on the matter, the backhoe operator and his assistant came to speak to me. Yes, they were being very careful and did an excellent job of protecting the monument. However, they were concerned that the stage stations indicated on it were not written out fully.

We had a pleasant conversation about the Pony Express in Contra Costa County, and the men said we really should have a good map of the Pony Express route. I asked if they would be working there for the next two or three days, as I would get a map for them.

Next I found several good maps in my **Atlas of American History** (Scribner, 1943), copied them, and made up a packet with a copy of our Lafayette history book for the two men. By the time I had done this, the work day had ended.

The following morning, I located the backhoe operator working on Golden Gate Way. He came down from his cab, still enthusiastic about the Pony Express and Lafayette. In fact, he said he had telephoned to his mother, Postmaster in Redding, about it. He was very pleased to receive the packets, we shook hands, and I left.

On the third day, Sue Kibby telephoned to me that (the backhoe operator?) had come to Mail Boxes, thinking that I worked there, and was very disappointed not to see me. However, he left a present for the Historical Society: a horseshoe the crew had found when breaking up the pavement between Lafayette Plaza and the Union service station (see photo on page 1).

All this was one of the most pleasant and exciting things to happen this summer, to see how enthusiastic these men were about what they were doing, their excitement about the Pony Express, and their generosity.

—by Ruth Dyer

[Ed. note: the horseshoe is approximately 4" wide by 5" high. To my untrained eye, the variations in thickness and width of the metal clearly indicate "not machine made". Would anyone like to help identify its age?]

History Room in Library Gathers Steam

The Lafayette Community Foundation is progressing steadily towards its goal as stated in its mission statement: "The Lafayette Community Foundation serves as a vital community resource, investing in programs and projects that promote and enhance the civic, cultural, educational and environmental health of Lafayette. The Foundation provides donors the opportunity to build a legacy by investing in Lafayette and beyond, through identification and support of community needs and organizations."

Each member of LHS can help the cause of history by donating to the Foundation and designating that the contribution is for the History Room in the new Library. Already, members of the LHS have made substantial donations to the History room, as has the LHS Board of Directors. The Board took advantage of an opportunity to double its $7,500 contribution via a matching grant obtained by the Foundation. Individuals may also request matching funds for their contributions to this cause, as long as the matching funds last. Time is of the essence!

If you have questions, or would like information about contributing, please call me at (925) 283-6812.

—by Marechal Duncan

Drivers Wanted

Just like the Volkswagen TV commercials, we say "Drivers Wanted."

Can you walk and chew gum at the same time? Can you pat your head and rub your tummy at the same time? The LHS may need you! We are planning a training session for drivers of the Model T Fire Engine, "Old Betsy".

Probably sometime about Veteran's Day or Thanksgiving we will bring the Model T to a LARGE parking area to give anyone a chance to try their skill. There are three pedals and two levers on the steering column. A driver must be able to work the pedals and the levers at the same time.

Further, reverse requires the use of both feet on different pedals and the hands on a lever. It isn't difficult, but it is different from the modern automatic transmission, an accelerator pedal, and power steering.

Instead of UNCLE SAM WANTS YOU it now is LHS WANTS YOU! If you are interested in learning to drive a Model T, or if you already know how but need a refresher, call me at 284-4603.

—by George Wasson

Lafayette Plaza Renovation

Slow progress is being made on the renovation of Lafayette Plaza (formerly Plaza Park). Completion of the project is scheduled for April 2001.

Unfortunately there are no city funds available for restoration of the historic buildings on Plaza Way. LHS has set aside funds to assist in the restoration (Fern Powell Davis fund) but it is only enough to pay for development of plans for the project. Other sources of funding will be explored including the newly established Lafayette Community Foundation.

Without restoration of the buildings, the plaza project will be quite incomplete. With the help of LHS members and other Lafayette citizens the project can ultimately be completed, giving new life to the "Heart of Lafayette". We encourage your support.

—by Bill Somerton

Inventory of Historical Markers in Lafayette

Member Bill Somerton undertook a project to list all the memorial markers in Lafayette, and came up with the surprising total of 26! His list includes transcriptions of the full texts on the markers, in addition to the information published here. Needless to say, the compilation of the list took longer than Bill expected. Herewith, in no particular order, the list, thinned down to fit the space we have available in the newsletter:

FIRST SETTLEMENT OF LAFAYETTE
Erected by the Lafayette Historical Society on the occasion of Lafayette's Sesquicentennial, February 7, 1998
Located on Happy Valley Road

LAFAYETTE THE PIONEER SETTLEMENT
Erected by Lafayette Lions Club, Aug. 13, 1955
Located in Plaza Park

ELAM AND MARGARET BROWN HOMESITE
Erected by the Lafayette Historical Society, 1981
Located on Lafayette Circle in front of Petars Restaurant

DEDICATED TO THE PONY EXPRESS
Lafayette Historical Society, 1992
Located in Plaza Park

LAFAYETTE HOUSE - PONY EXPRESS STATION
Various Donors, April 23, 1998
Located on SW corner of Mt. Diablo Blvd. and Moraga Rd.

OLD TOWN PLAZA
Dedicated by the Rotary Club of Lafayette, June 13, 1970
Located in Plaza Park

PIONEER STORE
Dedicated by the Rotary Club of Lafayette, June 13, 1970
Located on Plaza Way

SITE OF BICKERSTAFF HOUSE
Dedicated October 17, 1998. Monument donated by Ed Stokes. Lafayette Historical Society
Located at 3615 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

LAFAYETTE SCHOOL HOUSE NUMBER TWO
Lafayette Historical Society, dedicated in 1998
Located at Mt. Diablo Blvd.

LAFAYETTE CEMETERY
Lafayette Historical Society, 1974
Located on entrance gatepost

GEILS BUILDING
Dedicated by Soroptimist Club of Lafayette-Orinda, June 20, 1971
Located on Plaza Way

WAY SIDE INN
Dedicated June 13, 1970. Rotary Club of Lafayette
Located on Plaza Way

LAFAYETTE GRAMMAR SCHOOL
Dedicated May 6, 1973. Lafayette Historical Society
Located at 955 Moraga Road

LAFAYETTE TOWN HALL
Dedicated by the Lafayette Historical Society, 1978
Located at Moraga Road and School Street

SACRAMENTO NORTHERN RAILROAD
LAFAYETTE STATION - Moraga Blvd. near Victoria Place
LAFAYETTE WEST STATION - School St. at Topper Lane
RELIEZ STATION ROAD - at Olympic Blvd.
GLENSIDE - on Glenside Road
BURTON - across from Community Center
Lafayette Historical Society, September 1991

VETERANS' MEMORIAL FLAGPOLE
Presented by the parents of Timothy Armo Thomas. Died October 31, 1972 in Vietnam
Located in Plaza Park

BICENTENNIAL LIBERTY TREE
November 18, 1974
Located at 950 Dewing Ave.

MEMORIAL GAZEBO
Dedicated September 20, 1987. Various Donors
Lafayette Commission on the Bicentennial of the U. S. Constitution
Located at Mt. Diablo Blvd and Golden Gate Way

SITE OF ROLLING RIDGE RANCH
Located at Briones Regional Park Trail Parking Lot on Pleasant Hill Road near Springhill Rd.
East Bay Regional Park District

GENERAL LAFAYETTE
Various Donors in Lafayette, 1991
Located in Plaza Park

MEMORIAL PARK - EMIL AND VIRGINIA ANDERSON
Located on Regional Trail at Golden Gate Way

BLUE STAR MEMORIAL BY-WAY
Dedicated March 1997, Lafayette Garden Club
Located at Mt. Diablo Blvd. and First Street

Board of Directors Actions

May 9, 2000 meeting—

Discussed: the possibility of a change in ownership of Lafayette Town Hall, and the possibility of the Society assuming responsibility for its operation; the pending city renovation of Lafayette Plaza in conjunction with street improvements in the area; the loss of the Society's workroom/storage space to a paying tenant; and heard that there are firm plans to include a History Room in the new Lafayette Library, whose possible locations were also discussed.

September 12, 2000 meeting—

Contributed $7,500 from the Society's general funds to the Lafayette Community Foundation, earmarked for the History Room in the new Lafayette Library. The contribution is expected to earn matching funds from Foundation sources. Some LHS members have individually contributed to this fund.

'Round and About

[Ed. Note: This column will appear occasionally as we hear about activities of other historical organizations in the area.]

Christmas 1886—A Musical Christmas

Presented by Hayward Area Historical Society, featuring authentic Victorian decorations and toys under the trees in the McConaghy House in Hayward, Nov. 25-Dec. 30. $4 ($3 seniors). Call 510 581-0223.

Rosie the Riveter Memorial Dedication

The memorial to WW II's Rosie the Riveters will be held Oct. 14th, at the Rosie the Riveter Memorial Park in Richmond. For info, www.rosietheriveter.org, or watch your newpaper for details.

Lost and Found

As sometimes happens, someone went home from the pot luck dinner last May missing a piece of serving silverware. If you're missing something, please call Ruth Dyer to reclaim it, at 283-3812.

2000/2001 Directors

President: Tom Titmus 299-2030
Vice President:
Marechal Duncan 283-6812
Treasurer: Paul Sheehan .. 284-1287
Recording Secretary:
Ruth Dyer 283-8312
Corresponding Secretary:
Oliver Hamlin 283-6822
Keith Blakeney 284-2221
Janice Crosetti-Titmus 299-2030
Mary McCosker 284-5376
Bill Somerton 284-9785
Joseph Van Overveen 283-3650
Bill Wakeman 283-3908
Gary Willcuts 283-0706

2000/2001 Committee Chairs

Potluck Dinner:
Richard Johnson 283-0199
Archives: (vacant)
Book Sales: Ruth Dyer 283-8312
Community Relations:
Marechal Duncan 283-6812
Displays: Bill Somerton ... 284-9785
Fire Engine:
George Wasson 284-4603
Historian: Bill Wakeman .. 283-3908
LHS Online: (vacant)
Membership:
Oliver Hamlin 283-6822
Newsletter: Gary Willcuts 283-0706
Mailing: James Sturman .. 932-7620
Oral History: (vacant)
Plaza Park: (vacant)
Programs:
Jop Van Overveen 283-3650
Publicity: (vacant)
Walking Tours:
Mary McCosker 284-5376

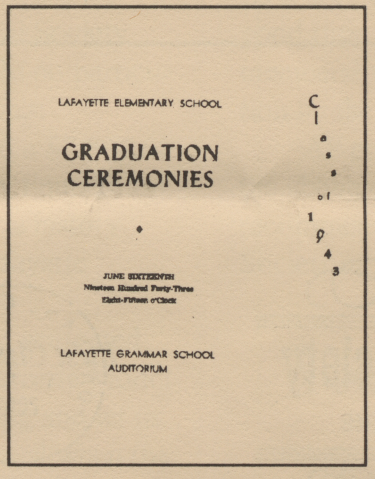
Do You Know This Man?

Pictured at left is a photograph from the Moraga Historical Society's archives. Unfortunately, its subject is unidentified, and the Moraga Society would like to rectify that.

The photo is about 20" wide by 24" high, and is glued to a canvas stretched over a wooden frame. There is a highly visible water stain down the right side of the photo.

If you have a clue to the man's identity, please call Ruth Dyer at 283-8312, who will pass the information on to Moraga.

—by Gary Willcuts


LAFAYETTE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

GRADUATION CEREMONIES

JUNE SIXTEENTH
Nineteen Hundred Forty-Three
Eight-Fifteen o'Clock

LAFAYETTE GRAMMAR SCHOOL
AUDITORIUM

Addition to Archives

Kirby Morgan (now of Coarsegold, CA), a member of the Lafayette Grammar School graduating class of 1943, has presented a copy of his graduation program to LHS. He and his 50 classmates heard words of wisdom from W.B. Ellis, renditions of "Symphonic Hour" and "Elves' Dance" by the School Orchestra, and other presentations at the June 16th ceremonies.

Thanks, Kirby.

Lafayette Historical Society Member Information

(Please photocopy form for additional names)

Name: _____ Spouse: _____

Address: _____ City: _____

Phone: Day _____ Evening _____ State/Zip: _____

Membership Categories & Annual Dues: (please check one)

____ Life membership—$100.00 (one time fee) ____ Family membership—$10.00

____ Business membership—$50.00 ____ Student membership—$2.50

Please indicate areas of special interest:

___ Annual dinner ___ Archives ___ LHS Online ___ Displays ___ Fire Engine
___ Landmarks ___ News Clips ___ Oral History ___ Photo collection ___ Programs
___ Research ___ Telephoning ___ Walking Tours ___ Other _____

Mail Check for dues $_____ and voluntary Fire Engine Maintenance contribution $_____ to:

LHS, PO Box 133, Lafayette, CA 94549

Lafayette Historical Society CALENDAR

November Board of Directors Meeting

Date:	Tuesday, November 14, 2000
Time:	7:00 pm
Place:	Lafayette Town Hall, Moraga Road at School St., 1st floor conference room

For information on membership, contact Oliver Hamlin, 283-6822.

Lafayette Historical Society
POST OFFICE BOX 133, LAFAYETTE, CA 94549

First Class Mail

OAKLAND CA
OCT 6
2000

Lafayette Library
952 Moraga Road
Lafayette, CA 94549

Return Service Requested